

S O M E CONSIDERATIONS

Offered to the Honourable *House of Commons* against a Bill depending about

Transportation of Wooll.

WHereas there is a Bill depending, the Preamble whereof seems to be against Transportation of Wooll, the Scope and Consequence of it (as is humbly conceived) will tend rather to encourage it: For whereas it is suggested in the said Bill, that the Act made in the 14th. Year of His Majesties Reign, making Transporting of Wooll Felony, is ineffectual for the preventing thereof, and therefore prays the Repealing the Felony of that Act, without confirming the rest of that Act; as if making Transportation to be Felony did encourage Transporting; that Suggestion with all submission is conceived to be a great mistake: For though it must be granted (whatever Laws have been or shall be made in this case) that some Persons for their own Lucre (though it be never so much to the Damage of the great Manufacture of this Kingdom, and notwithstanding all the Care imaginable) will adventure to transport Wooll. Yet for some Years after that Act of the 14 *Car. 2.* was in force, there was a great stop put to the said Transportation, untill Wooll so increased in *Ireland* beyond its Consumption there and here, that Great Quantities were actually transported from thence; but till that Glut the Act of the 12th. Year of His Majesties Reign (by which the Forfeiture was Three Shillings for every Pound of Wooll, besides the Wooll forfeited) conjoyned with the Act in the 14th. Year of His Majesties Reign, was found effectual to prohibit Transporting Wooll, for the Prosecutor had liberty to prosecute upon which Act he pleased as to the Forfeiture; and therefore there was not one Person in twenty prosecuted upon the Penalty of what was prosecuted on the Forfeiture of Three Shillings per Pound, that of Felony serving onely to make Offenders afraid, but those Acts of the 12th. and 14th. were in this found defective, that they did not sufficiently provide how to make good Proof of an Intention to Transport when Wooll was brought near the Sea-side: So that both Acts together, as the Forfeiture now stands (saving the defects aforesaid, and want of putting the Laws in execution) are far better as they are than with this new intended Alteration, as is found in Ten Years Experience, by those who have made it their whole business to attend this Affair, if those Persons principally concerned in point of Interest may be supposed capable of Judging; or those who have made it their business not onely to inspect it, but to keep a constant Correspondency about this matter beyond the Seas, and who for some Years have been partly at Sea, and partly on the *Shoecoasts*, to make Discoveries, and who afterwards have prosecuted those Discoveries, some in the Exchequer, others at the Assizes, to the number at the least of One hundred Persons, who have been found guilty of Transporting Wooll contrary to those Acts, but many of them escaped the Penalties by the late general Act of Pardon.

And upon Complaint made about Ten Years since to His Majesty and Council, (who were very apprehensive of this Mischief, and willing by all lawful ways imaginable to prevent it) of some Negligence and Remisness of Officers and others, it was referred by His Majesty and Council to the Council for Trade, which Council for Trade making Report to the Board, His Majesty and Council passed this Opinion following.

At the Court at *Whitehall*, April 1669.

WHereas in pursuance of an Order of this Board of the 20th. of November last, referring to the Council for Trade the Proposals of William Carter, for preventing the Exportation of Wooll, and conveying thereof beyond the Seas, the said Council have returned their Report to the Board, that having discoursed with the said William Carter, and such other persons as they thought capable of giving them any good Information touching this matter, they find the Exportation of Wooll is of a destructive consequence to the Trade of this Kingdom, and that the same hath grown into practice as well by reason of the doubtfulness of some Expressions in the Statute made in the 12th. Year of His Majesties Reign, prohibiting the Exportation of Wooll, as by the neglect and remisness of Officers in not putting the Laws in due execution.

Whereupon the late Lord Keeper *Bridgman*, being then in Council, prepared a Bill, and at the Opening of the next Session of Parliament caused it to be read in the House of Lords, and when it was committed, several Merchants and Staplers in *London*, and also Clothiers were summoned, and did often attend the Lords of the Committee, where two Judges were constantly present to draw up Amendments to that Bill, which took up at least 6 or 8 days at the Committee, and when the said Bill was reported and engrossed, by means of one Clause in that Bill, *To burn the Ship wherein was found any Wooll*, that Bill was at last rejected by the Lords; and afterwards the substance of that Bill in another Session was put into the House of Lords without the Clause of *Burning the Ship*, and was engrossed and sent down to the Commons, and then committed, but miscarried also; and instead thereof the Bill now depending comes in, no ways approved of by the said Merchants and Clothiers, because instead of prohibiting it will be found in Experience to be the occasion of Transporting much Wooll: Therefore before this Bill pass, the said Merchants and Clothiers pray they may be heard, who question not but to give satisfaction to this Honourable House of the great Inconvenience thereof.

And further, the Bill now depending does propound to restrain Exporting, but by increasing the Number of Ports in *Ireland* to have leave to Export; and by increasing also the Number of Ports in *England* where Wooll may be Imported, this Bill instead of restraining must needs give much more liberty to Transport than ever. So that now it will be utterly impossible to prevent Transportation of Wooll, because where Wooll is suspected and known to be Exported, it shall be pretended to be Imported, and very fairly coloured by this Bill.

Trade
157

318